

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6344

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, RP

SUBJECT: NEW CRISIS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

1. AMBASSADOR ADVISED BY AIDE TO NUNCIO ON AUGUST 22 THAT GOP HAD TAKEN FINAL STEP IN RIDING ITSELF OF EM-BARRASSING ENCUMBRANCE OF RELIGIOUS DETAINEES. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, GOVERNMENT HAD PAROLED FATHER LUIS JALANDONI AND TWO OTHERS CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL OFFENSES (POSSESSION OF WEAPONS, ETC.) TO BISHOP GAVIOLA AND OTHER HIGH CHURCH OFFICIALS. EMBASSY HAS SINCE CONFIRMED THAT AT LEAST JALANDONI HAS BEEN RELEASED, AND TWO OTHERS MAY ALSO BE FREE.

2. GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE UNDONE GOOD IMPRESSION IT WAS ATTEMPTING TO CREATE AT HOME AND ABROAD BY RAID (REPORTED BY UPI) ON JESUIT NOVITiate OUTSIDE QUEZON CITY ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 24. RAID AUTHORIZED BY DEFENSE SECRETARY WARRANT TO CAPTURE ELUSIVE COMMUNIST PARTY HEAD JOSE MARIA SISON AND CONDUCTED BY AT LEAST 150 TROOPERS WHO ACTUALLY WERE LANDED ON COMPOUND IN HELICOPTERS, POINTED WEAPONS AT ASSEMBLED RELIGIOUS (INCLUDING 25 NUNS VISITING FROM OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, 19 DIOCESAN PRIESTS FROM ALL OVER COUNTRY AND THREE MEMBERS OF BOARD OF ASSOCIATION OF MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS OF MEN IN PHILIPPINES), SEARCHED QUARTERS, AND TOOK OFF TO DETENTION FATHER JOSE BLANCO

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AND 20 STUDENTS FOR CATHOLIC ACTION PARTICIPATING IN ONE

OF HIS POPULAR COMMUNITY ACTION SEMINARS.

3. BLANCO IS WELL KNOWN AS TONDO-ORIENTED ACTIVIST AND PRESUMABLY MILITARY PICKED HIM UP AS FACE SAVING TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY. YOUTHS INTERROGATED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT CAMP CRAME, GIRLS LATER BEING MOVED TO FORT BONIFACIO. NO CHARGES YET FILED AGAINST THEM BUT MILITARY, ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, ARE GOING TO CLAIM THEY SAW DISPARAGING REMARKS ABOUT MARCOS ON CLASSROOM BLACKBOARD. BLANCO HAS ASSURED JESUIT HEAD FATHER MAYO, WHO ALSO MISTAKENLY PICKED UP BY MILITARY, THAT HE HAD NOT USED ANY SUBVERSIVE LITERATURE.

4. THE JESUITS REPORTED RAID DIRECTLY TO CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF PHILIPPINES RATHER THAN TO NUNCIO BECAUSE THEY REGARDED IT AS DOMESTIC MATTER. JESUITS AT LEAST ALSO REGARD EXERCISE AS FIASCO, UNDOING VALUE OF MARCOS' RECENT CONCILIATORY MOVES.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH COULD BE ARGUED THAT END JUSTIFIES MEANS WHEN JOSE MARIA SISON IN SIGHT, HEAVY BUT EMPTY HANDED THEATRICS OF THIS RAID WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE VERY DAMAGING REPERCUSSIONS. GOVERNMENT MAY ATTEMPT TO STONEWALL TO SAVE ITSELF FROM EMBARRASSMENT (NOT LEAST THE FACT THAT SECRETARY MELCHOR LEARNED ABOUT IT ONLY FROM AMBASSADOR). EVENT WILL PROBABLY ALSO STIMULATE SOME SERIOUS SOUL SEARCHING ON GOVERNMENT'S PART ON HOW INCIDENT INVOLVING MAJOR PHILIPPINE INTERESTS COULD BE PROMOTED IN SUCH UNCOORDINATED FASHION.

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